

(b) detecting (1) the HCV core antigen by an antibody or antibodies for detection of the HCV core antigen, <sup>and/or</sup> or (2) the anti-HCV core antibodies.

19. (New) The method according to claim 18, wherein said antibodies for detection of HCV core antigen are selected from antibodies recognizing and binding to a region from position 100 to position 130 <sup>or</sup> from position 41 to 50 of an HCV polyprotein (HCV core antigen) and wherein said peptide(s) is <sup>is</sup> peptide(s) which lacks <sup>12</sup> epitopes recognized by said antibodies for <sup>antibodies</sup> detection of HCV core antigen.

20. (New) The method according to claim 18, wherein said <sup>antibodies</sup> antibodies for detection of HCV core antigen are antibodies recognizing and binding to a region from position 100 to position 130 of an HCV polyprotein (HCV core antigen) and wherein said peptide <sup>is</sup> peptide which lacks epitopes recognized by said antibodies for detection of HCV core antigen.

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*could* 21. (New) The method according to claim 18, wherein said sample is contacted with said antibodies for detection of HCV core antigen and said peptide in the presence of one or more detergents with one or more alkyl chains of at least 10 carbon atoms and one or more secondary to quaternary amines, or one or more non-ionic surfactants or both.

22. (New) The method according to claim 18, wherein said detergent alkyl chain and secondary to quaternary amine is a surfactant with 12 to 16 carbon atoms and a tertiary or quaternary amine.

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